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3 June 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Basic School
Office of Training

SUBJECT: Success and Failure in the Basic Orientation Course

1. When the use of a pre-training testing program was first proposed in September, 1952, it was anticipated that such a program would provide information of value in planning and organizing the training courses. It was pointed out at that time that such problems, for example, as level of presentation and course tempo could be most efficiently solved if the level and range of abilities represented by students were known. In keeping with this general concept, the A & E Staff has been conducting limited studies, on a routine basis, of the relationship between performance on the Professional Employee Test Battery and performance in the BOC.

2. These studies have demonstrated quite conclusively that success and failure in the BOC is determined primarily on the basis of verbal (or "intellectual") ability, and skill in analyzing and absorbing material quickly. Success and failure in the course can be predicted, with an unusually high level of assurance, on the basis of three items of information:

- a. Level of education.
- b. Vocabulary level, measured under speed conditions.
- c. Ability to abstract and analyze information presented in charts and graphs.

3. Our ability to predict performance in BOC on the basis of these items greatly exceeds the level of similar predictions ordinarily achieved for college courses. The implications of this include the following:

- a. BOC is "more academic," or more intellectual in its demands on the student, than most college courses.
- b. The inclusion of educational level as a predictor reflects the importance, in learning the course curriculum, of highly developed "learning skills." Notwithstanding level

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of ability, the student without a college background apparently is handicapped by his lack of skill (developed in college courses) in learning from lectures and reading materials.

- c. Notwithstanding their operational need for the information conveyed in the BOC, most persons without college training and without a high level of academic ability are deriving relatively little benefit from the course. (For the most part, these persons appear to be qualified to perform their assignments.)
- d. In addition to the difficulty they have with the course, verbally unskilled people are unnecessarily embarrassed by the requirement to compete in a weak area. Unfortunately, many of these people thus start their Agency careers and their OTR experience under adverse conditions, with a poor performance record which could be anticipated and precluded.

4. This relationship between verbal ability and performance in the BOC raises many questions relative to the objectives of the course and of the Office of Training:

- a. Do Agency personnel who cannot meet the academic demands of BOC need the information contained in the course?

- (1) Do they require both the Basic Intelligence and the Communism curricula?

- (2) If they need this information, how can it best be presented for them?

- b. If BOC is to continue in its present form and at its present level, what provision should be made to accommodate the wide spread of verbal ability represented in the student groups?

- (1) Should students be selected for, or excluded from, enrollment on basis of ability and background?

- (2) Should students be selected for seminars or other sub-groups on this basis, for appropriate teaching help?

5. An additional problem, also bearing on the objectives of the BOC and OTR, concerns the relationship of the BOC to other courses. At the present time, performance in BOC is largely unrelated to performance

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in CMT. There is no question that the curricula, the goals, and the demands of these courses are quite different, and the lack of relationship is understandable. However, as a basic, preliminary, or pre-requisite course, the BOC does not provide a basis for screening students for further operational training.



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Assessment and Evaluation Staff
Office of Training

TR/EAR:rm (2 June 1955)

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